

House And Senate Bills Would Require A Full Time Nurse At Every NC School

By Administrator

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Representative Cynthia Ball (D-Wake) has filed House Bill 1203, which will staff every school in each of North Carolina's 115 school districts with a full-time, permanent school nurse. Representatives Donna White (R-Johnston), Gale Adcock (D-Wake), and Josh Dobson (R-Avery, McDowell, Mitchell) join Representative Ball in sponsoring the bi-partisan bill. NC Senator Wiley Nickel (D-Wake) has filed a companion bill, Senate Bill 850. "School nurses contribute to the health, well-being, and educational success of our public school children, and in many NC communities they are the only health care professional a child sees," said Representative Ball. "With the COVID-19 pandemic, we must be especially vigilant about monitoring the spread of the disease, particularly in a high-contact environment such as a school. As we contemplate a plan for a return to school, a nurse in each school will have a positive impact on the overall school environment as well as the individual health of students and staff."

NC School Boards Association President Brenda Stephens offers the Association's support: "As we work with state leaders to develop plans to safely reopen school buildings for our students, staff, families, and community, an essential first step is to provide a nurse in every school. This is a critical investment knowing how quickly COVID-19 can spread and given the growing need for healthcare professionals in our schools even before this pandemic."

And School Nurse Association of NC President Jennifer Sharpe, BSN, RN, NCSN adds, "Each day school nurses balance the responsibilities of student physical health and mental safety, transmission of communicable diseases, and accommodations necessary to ensure every student has access to the legally-required 'appropriate education'. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school nurses are still the primary healthcare liaison between multiple school sites, parents, community resources, and public health entities."

Representative Ball has also sponsored a related bill, House Bill 1206, which will establish a tiered system of support for students by increasing the number of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists serving our public schools. Representatives Becky Carney (D-Mecklenburg) and Sydney Batch (D-Wake) are also primary sponsors. NC Senator Jay Chaudhuri (D-Wake) has filed a companion bill, Senate Bill 84